

Original Handcart, 1856

Courtesy—Daughters of Utah Pioneers

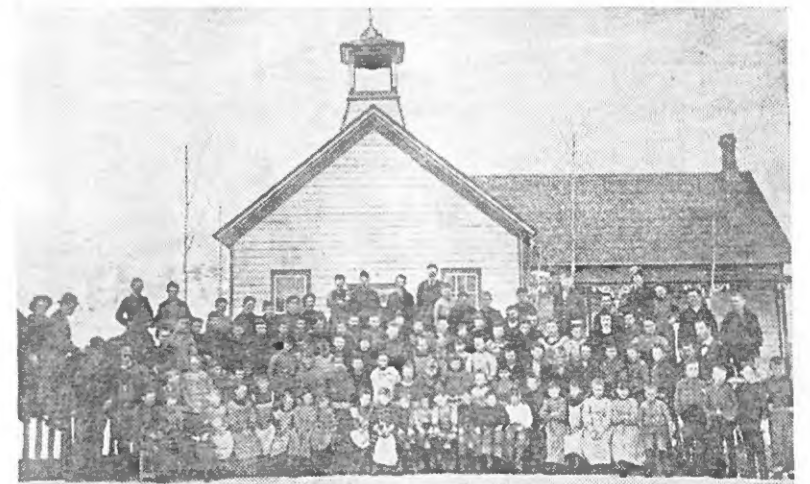
## SCHOOLS AND THEIR TEACHERS

*Would you like to go back to the old brick school,  
Hear the bell ring once again,  
See your knife carved desk, your book and slate.  
And play hookey now and then—?*

*Then step on my magic carpet,  
The one we call memory,  
And over the clouds of the by-gone years  
We'll journey—just you and me.*

*Look! there's the schoolhouse just over the hill,  
There the schoolmaster stands in the door,  
He's wearing his spectacles on the end of his nose,  
His coat reaches most to the floor.*

*There's a rosy cheeked girl, her hair in long braids,  
And a freckled faced boy, I can see,  
My darling, it's you with a slate on your arm,  
And the boy that you wait for, is me.*



First School House

It is said that Utah's Pioneers brought their culture with them. In every community one of the first buildings erected was a meeting-house built of canvas, logs or adobe brick. It was not only used as a

## Handcart Pioneers of Utah

No more dramatic history will ever be written than the story of the people who wended their way over one thousand miles of plains and mountains in order that they might arrive in Utah to share with the rest of the immigrants, the blessings of the new home of the pioneers. The lives of these pioneers were full of stories of long-suffering, heroism, devotion and loyalty to the ideal that had become a part of their lives. We retell the stories to remind the daughters of the courage and stamina of our men and women who risked the perils of an untried method of transportation. "That they might gather to the valley of the mountains." According to most historians, the handcart companies, although a unique method of transportation, was quite successful, for all but two companies arrived safe, and the expense was very small.

Hundreds of Saints, especially in England and Scandinavia, were anxious to gather to Zion and were continually pleading with the people in Utah to help them reach their goal. In answer to their pleas, the President and his associates decided that probably a less expensive mode of travel would be of benefit to the immigrants. As early as September, 1851, when President Young sent out his sixth epistle to the Saints he told them that as men were willing to make great sacrifices for gold he felt that they ought to be as willing to sacrifice for the gospel. This epistle reads in part as follows:

"How long shall it be said in truth 'the children' of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light?' Some of the children of the world have crossed the mountains and plains from Missouri to California, with a pack on their back, to worship their god—Gold! Some have performed the same journey with wheelbarrow; some have accomplished the same with a pack on a cow. Some of the Saints now in our midst came higher with wagons and carts made of wood, without a particle of iron . . . and had as good and safe a journey as any in the camps. Can you not do the same?"

In 1855 another plea came from President Young in the form of a communication to Franklin D. Richards who at that time was presiding over the British Mission.

"In regards to foreign emigrants for another year; have them take the northern route through New York and Chicago, and land at Iowa City, the western terminus of the Rock Island Railroad. There they will be provided with handcarts on which to haul their provisions and clothing. We will send experienced men to that point with instructions to aid them in every possible way; and let the Saints who intend to immigrate to Utah the coming season understand that they are expected to walk and draw their carts across the plains. Sufficient teams will be furnished to haul the aged, infirm, and those who are unable to walk. A few good cows will be sent along to furnish milk, and some beef cattle for the people to kill along the road. Now, have them gird up their loins and come while the way is open."

This document was published in the *Millennial Star* on February 23, 1856, which went into the homes of most of the Saints. It caused many

of the people who were unable to outfit themselves with ox teams and wagons to cross the plains, to feel that this was an answer to their desire to join the body of the Church. Most of them could hardly wait for the time to arrive when they could leave, and the spirit of gathering had taken such a hold on them that many quit their jobs before arrangements could be made for their transportation. They had begged that the leaders would in some way improvise ways and means that they could enter into the valley of the mountains. Now the answer had come. Ships were leaving England loaded with immigrants. The ship "Thornton" sailed from Liverpool in May of 1856 with seven hundred and sixty-four Saints aboard, and a few days later the ship "Horizon" left with eight hundred and fifty-six Saints aboard, making a total of sixteen hundred and twenty souls. They made good time, the first company reaching Iowa City June 26th and the second twelve days later. They were there met by men sent out by the presidency trained in outfitting the people for the strenuous journey. It was quite late in the season and much work of preparation had to be done before they were ready to start their journey, as more carts and tents had to be made, cattle had to be purchased, and provisions gathered together.

The handcart was made of hickory or oak and sometimes both kinds of wood went into its construction, for the axle must be of strong hickory. The shafts were five to six feet long with three or four binding cross bars from the back part to the fore part of the body. Then there was a space of three to four feet for the lead man, woman, or boy who was to pull the cart. The width of the cart was that of the usual wagon tracks so that it could follow along the wagon tracks as the pioneers journeyed along through meadows of Iowa, the long buffalo pastures of Nebraska, and Wyoming, and the mountainous section of country on their way to Utah. Across the bars was sewn bed ticking or sort of canvas. On this improvised cart was loaded flour, food, bedding, extra clothing, cooking utensils and a tent. The family cart was similar in size, but had an iron axle and surmounted with a box three or four feet long and eight inches high. Two persons were allotted to draw each cart and babies and ill children were given the privilege of riding. Sometimes the cart was covered with a canvas for shade which also formed a covering in case of rain. Brother Chauncey G. Webb, who was to superintend the making of the carts, had a hard time getting the material needed and many times was compelled to substitute. Every available mechanic was called to assist him, while the women of the company made the tents. The buying of the cattle was under the direction of Brothers William H. Kimball and George D. Grant.

It is said that nearly half of the four thousand three hundred and twenty-six Saints who immigrated to Utah in 1856 crossed the plains with the handcart companies. The first company led by Edward Ellsworth and the second by Daniel D. McArthur numbered in all about five hundred people. These companies together had fifty handcarts and left Iowa City on June 9th and June 11th, respectively. The journey was a hard one but they were able to reach the valley on the same day, September 26th. Upon their arrival in the valley they were met by President Young, Heber C. Kimball, and a party of people who had come to welcome them to the valley. These people were accompanied by Captain Pitt's Brass Band and a



creek chief, has a good house and household furniture, out-buildings, horses, cattle, wagons, 70 bushels of wheat thrashed and stored, and a plenty of vegetables with the exception of potatoes, which the worms destroyed.

Ka-nosh's rapid advancement in the scale of civilization is due, in addition to his own inherent energy, intelligence and anxiety to improve, to the pacific policy so wisely advocated by the Hon. G. W. Manypenny, commissioner of Indian affairs, and so ably counseled and carried out by his Excellency Brigham Young, Governor, and Ex-officio Superintendent. And it proves the efficacy of the patience and good example exercised by the whites, accompanied with timely encouragement, good usage and reasonable assistance.

Tintic is poor and alone, but still disaffected and threatening, and has gone to Uinta valley. Kind treatment seems to be wasted upon his savage disposition, and he is probably too old and hardened to be induced to lay aside his blood-thirsty feelings.

*Journal of Discourses—1857. Vol. IV*

A Discourse, by President Brigham Young, delivered in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, November 2, 1856.

Do you want to know the reason why I speak of our being so comfortably situated this morning in so comfortable a meeting house? We can return home and sit down and warm our feet before the fire, and can eat our bread and butter, &c., but my mind is yonder in the snow, where those immigrating Saints are, and my mind has been with them ever since I had the report of their start from Winter Quarters, (Florence), on the 3rd of September. I cannot talk about anything, I cannot go out or come in, but what in every minute or two minutes my mind reverts to them; and the questions—whereabouts are my brethren and sisters who are on the Plains, and what is their condition—force themselves upon me and annoy my feelings all the time. And were I to answer my own feelings, I should do so by undertaking to do what the conference voted I should not do, that is, I should be with them now in the snow, even though it should be up to the knees, up to the waist, or up to the neck. My mind is there, and my faith is there; I have a great many reflections about them. . . .

A good many teams have already gone out to meet the Saints who are struggling to gain this place; I can hardly keep from talking about them all the time, for when I am preaching they are uppermost in my mind. The brethren were liberal last Sunday in turning out to meet them with teams, still if any more feel desirous of going to their assistance, I will give them the privilege, and advise

them to take feed, not only for their own animals, but also for those of the brethren who have already gone out, for they will very likely be short. . . .

*Journal of Discourses—1857. Vol. IV*

A Discourse by President Brigham Young, delivered in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, November 2, 1856.

Here is brother Franklin D. Richards who has but little knowledge of business, except what he has learned in the Church; he came into the Church when a boy, and all the public business he has been in is the little he has done while in Liverpool, England; and here is brother Daniel Spencer, brother Richards' First Counselor and a man of age and experience, and I do not know that I will attach blame to either of them. But if, while at the Missouri river, they had received a hint from any person on this earth, or if even a bird had chirped it in the ears of brothers Richards and Spencer, they would have known better than to rush men, women, and children on to the prairie in the autumn months, on the third of September, to travel over a thousand miles. I repeat that if a bird had chirped the inconsistency of such a course in their ears, they would have thought and considered for one moment, and would have stopped those men, women, and children there until another year.

If any man or woman complains of me or of my Counselors, in regard to the lateness of some of this season's immigration, let the curse of God be on them and blast their substance with mildew and destruction, until their names are forgotten from the earth. I never thought of my being accused of advising or having anything to do with so late a start. The people must know that I know how to handle money and means, and I never supposed that anybody had a doubt of it. It will cost this people more to bring in those companies from the Plains, than it would to have seasonably brought them from the out-fitting point on the Missouri river. I do not believe that the biggest fool in the community could entertain the thought that all this loss of life, time, and means, was through the mismanagement of the First Presidency. . . .

As to the companies now out, we must bring them in; and another year we will send men to the Missouri river who understand the right management of affairs, and will send them in the speediest conveyances, so that they may not get the "big head" before they arrive there, and then they may be able to do as we tell them.

Can people come across the Plains with hand-carts? Ask brothers Edmund Ellsworth, Daniel D. McArthur and William Bunker, who

led the three hand-cart companies that have already arrived; and the brethren and sisters in those companies state that they crossed quicker and easier than the wagon companies.

*The Deseret News, November 12, 1856*

ARRIVALS.—Capt. A. O. Smoot with a wagon train and Capt. J. G. Willie with the 4th hand-cart company arrived on the 9th inst.

We were highly gratified with the appearance of the men, women and children who had encountered cold, snow and storms; with the thankful and joyous spirit they manifested; with the cheerfulness of those who had left the comforts and labors of home to encounter hardships for the timely deliverance of their brethren and sisters; and with the promptness of Bishop Hunter, his Counselors and the city Bishops in forthwith furnishing them comfortable quarters and food, in which the citizens most cheerfully and liberally sustained their Bishops.

After, all the hardships of the journey, mainly consequent upon so late a start, the mortality has been far less in br. Willie's company, than in many wagon companies that have started seasonably and with the usual conveniences for the trip. The eminent feasibility of the hand-cart movement had been previously demonstrated; its healthfulness is now proven by the experience of this company, late though they were and in storms, cold and snow. And that movement, from the first until now, has evidenced the wisdom and truthfulness of the plans, counselings and promises of the First Presidency upon that point, so far as they were complied with. And wherein they have not been fully carried out, the mistakes and oversights have been thus far overruled for the salvation of Israel, and always will be, so long as the Lord's covenant people strive to "live their religion."

*Journal of Discourses—1857. Vol. IV*

A Discourse by President Brigham Young, delivered in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, November 16, 1856. . . .

You have heard concerning the sufferings of the people in the hand-cart trains; and, probably you will hear the Elders, for some time to come, those who have lately returned from their missions and those now on the Plains, speak about the scenes they have witnessed, and I would like to forestall the erroneous impressions that many may otherwise imbibed on this subject.

Count the living and the dead, and you will find that not half the number died in brother Willie's hand-cart company, in proportion to the number in that company, as have died in past seasons by the cholera in single companies traveling with wagons and oxen, with carriages and horses, and that too in the fore-

part of the season. When you call to mind this fact, the relations of the sufferings of our companies this season will not be so harrowing to your feelings. With regard to those who have died and been laid away by the roadside on the Plains, since the cold weather commenced, let me tell you they have not suffered one hundredth part so much as did our brethren and sisters who have died with the cholera. . . .

As to the expediency of the hand-cart mode of traveling, brothers Ellsworth, McArthur, and Bunker, who piloted the three first hand-cart companies over the Plains, can testify that they easily beat the wagon companies. Brother Ellsworth performed the journey in sixty-three days, and brother McArthur in sixty-one and a half, notwithstanding the hindrance by the baggage wagons. If brother Willie's company could have had their provisions deposited at Laramie and at Green river, and had been free from wagons, they would have been in this valley by the time they were in the storms.

We are not in the least discouraged about the hand-cart method of traveling. . . .

*The Deseret News, December 19, 1856*  
REMARKS

By Elder Joseph A. Young, Tabernacle, Sunday, Nov. 16, 1856.

(Reported by J. V. Long.)

Brethren and sisters, as I have the latest news from companies yet on the plains, and as you are all anxious to hear from them, I have been the first one called upon to speak to you this morning.

You are aware that Capt. Geo. D. Grant's relief company left this city on the 7th of Oct., to go and meet the immigration. Capt. Grant kept an express in advance until we reached the Devil's Gate, when he sent three of us on to the Platte river, to see if we could find the companies or hear of them.

We traveled until the 28th, when we met Capt. Edward Martin's company of hand carts and Capt. Hodgett's wagon company, at a place called Red Buttes, 16 miles below the Platte bridge.

The brethren and sisters appeared to be in good health and spirits. Capt. Martin informed us that about 56 out of 600 had died upon the plains, up to that date. Those who had died were mostly old people. . . .

THE COMPANIES YET ON THE PLAINS.

Devil's Gate, Nov. 2, 1856.

PRESIDENT BRIGHAM YOUNG:

Dear Brother:—Knowing the anxiety you feel for the companies still out, and especially for the Hand-cart Company, I have concluded to send in your son Joseph A. and br. Abel Garr on an express from this place.

*Utah-Alter Vol. 1*